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Exidia nigricans: a new and legitimate name for *Exidia plana*

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Abstract — The new combination *Exidia nigricans* is proposed to replace the illegitimate *Exidia plana*.

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Molecular sequencing (Weiss & Oberwinkler, 2001) has confirmed the existence of two macroscopically distinct (but microscopically similar) European species in the *Exidia glandulosa* (Bull.) Fr. complex, a group of blackish, gelatinous heterobasidiomycetes (*Auriculariales*) saprotrophic on deciduous trees. The turbinate species, common in the British Isles on oak (*Quercus* spp) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*), is *Exidia glandulosa* sensu stricto (syn. *E. truncata* Fr.), as noted by Donk (1966). The effused, coalescing species, not uncommon on other deciduous trees, was referred to *Tremella plana* "Wigg. per Schleich." by Donk (1966), as the earliest valid name published after 1821, the then starting point date for this group of fungi under the Code of Botanical Nomenclature.

With the subsequent change in starting point date to 1753, however, *Tremella nigricans* With. (acknowledged by Donk 1966 as the earliest published name for the effused species) became the earliest valid name for this taxon. (Note that *Tremella nigricans* Bull., which provided the epithet for the sanctioned name *Tubercularia nigricans* Link : Fr., is not itself sanctioned and hence is an illegitimate, later homonym of *Tremella nigricans* With.) As a further consequence of the change in starting point date, *Tremella plana* F.H. Wigg. (Wiggers, 1780) became an illegitimate homonym of *T. plana* With. (Withering, 1776), itself a nomen dubium until typified. Consequently, the binomial *Exidia plana* is to be attributed to Donk alone (McNeill et al., 2006: Art. 58.1) dating from 1966, and itself is superfluous and hence illegitimate (McNeill et al., 2006: Art. 52.1) because of the inclusion of several earlier available epithets. Articles in the Code are retroactive unless specifically limited.

Tremella nigricans With. is, fortunately, a more plausible name than the illegitimate *T. plana* F.H. Wigg. since the latter was described by Wiggers (1780) as 'initio viridis dein aterrimus' (green at first becoming black), suggesting a gelatinous cyanobacterium (*Nostoc* sp.) rather than a fungus. The description of *T. nigricans* (Withering, 1776) is not only more correct in colour terms, but includes a reference to a pre-Linnean description by Dillenius (1741), who noted the presence of hyphal pegs (a macroscopically visible feature of the species not mentioned by Wiggers). Both Dillenius and Withering called *T. nigricans* 'witches-butter', a vernacular name long associated with *Exidia glandulosa* s.l.

The new combination *Exidia nigricans* is therefore proposed as both an earlier and a more appropriate name for the species hitherto known as *Exidia plana*.

Exidia nigricans (With.) P. Roberts **comb. nov.**

MycoBank MB512661

≡ *Tremella nigricans* With., Bot. Arrang. Veg. Great-Britain 2: 732 (1776) [non *T. nigricans* Bull. (1790), nec Poir. (1808), nec (Fr.) Sacc. (1888)]

= *Tremella plana* F.H. Wigg., Prim. Fl. Holsat.: 95 (1780) [nom. illegit., non *T. plana* With. (1776)]

≡ *Exidia plana* Donk [ut "(Wigg.) Donk"], Persoonia 4: 228 (1966) [nom. illegit.]

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